



# A campus for learning and play

Take a walk north from The Square, along the Avenue to the Castle and west along the Deveron, and you'll pass a diverse range of well-used and loved facilities, parkland and activities.

A campus for learning and play is the start of an ambitious, multi-year initiative for coordinated, high-quality development in this area.

Building on the character of the land and buildings within it to enhance this special place for the benefit of locals and visitors alike.

## The first step on this journey is creating a shared plan for future development.

On behalf of the community, Huntly & District Development Trust received funding from the Scottish Government to create what is known as a Community-led Place Plan to assist different developments to be taken forward in a coordinated way.

This presentation outlines the context for the plan, the activities that generated the contents for it and the results of the different strands of work coming together.



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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The trust provided an element of match-funding alongside contributions from the Scottish Government and the Marr Area Partnership. A team from Willie Miller Urban Design, Nick Wright Planning and icecream architecture have facilitated the process of creating the plan in partnership with the community.





Map of Strathbogie (as Huntly then was) in 1750, the key features that still define it today can be seen; the rivers, castle & avenue, the change in level and central square.



This above aerial photo looking south in 1950 shows a growing town next to openspace with only some development beyond farmland. Over the following fifty years new schools, sports facilities and houses expanded northwards

# The lie of the land...

While today it stands in ruins, Huntly Castle has shaped how the town has grown, with its avenue leading south forming the key artery of which the town’s characteristic grid layout is set around.



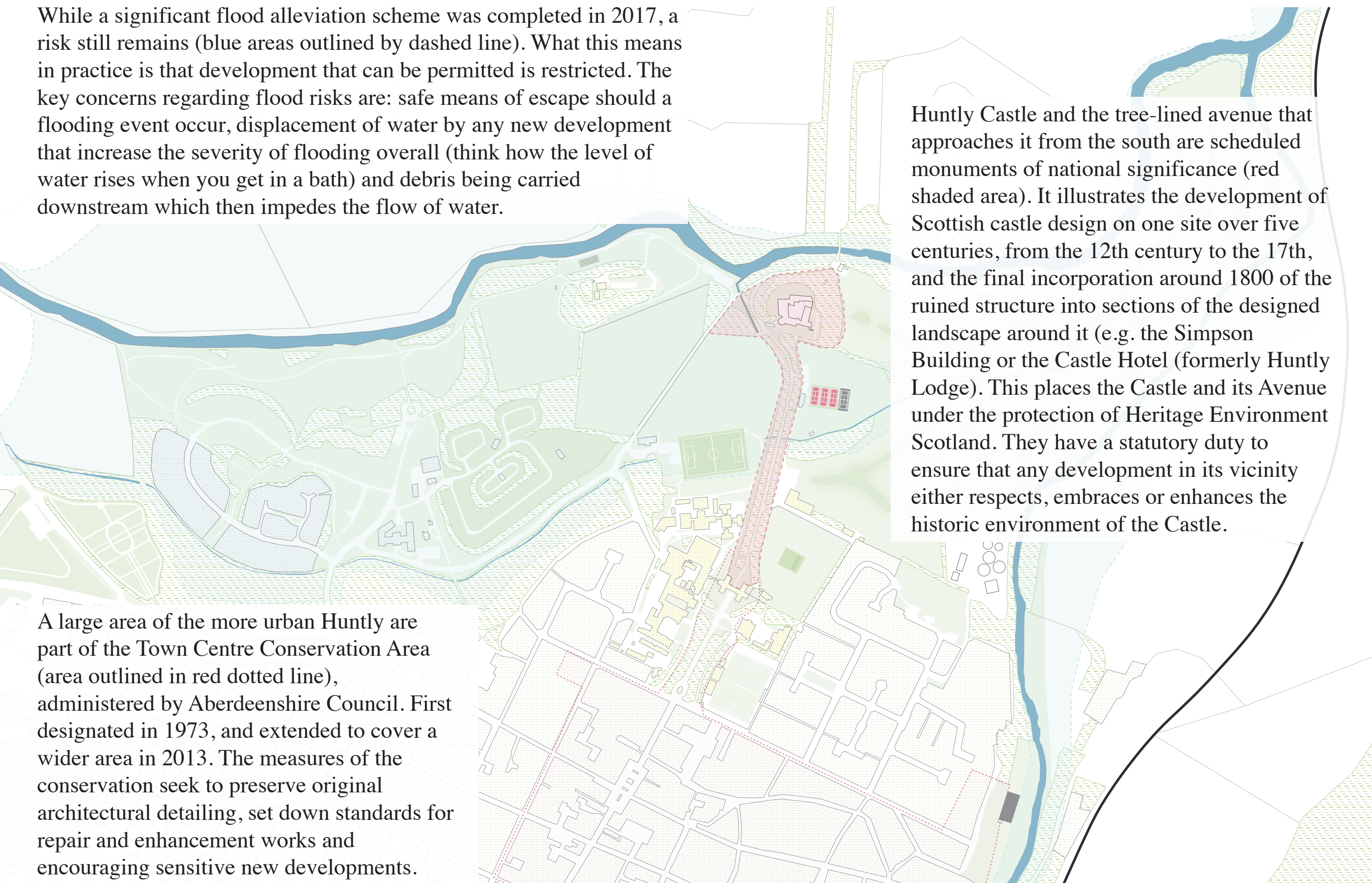
Much of the land in the north of Huntly is open greenspace, whether woodland, grass, meadows or wetland providing sources of food or shelter for threatened species like red squirrel or swifts.



Modern developments have brought new unique activities, such as roller-skiing at Huntly Nordic Outdoor Centre.

When looking at developments there are possible restrictions that need to be considered:

While a significant flood alleviation scheme was completed in 2017, a risk still remains (blue areas outlined by dashed line). What this means in practice is that development that can be permitted is restricted. The key concerns regarding flood risks are: safe means of escape should a flooding event occur, displacement of water by any new development that increase the severity of flooding overall (think how the level of water rises when you get in a bath) and debris being carried downstream which then impedes the flow of water.

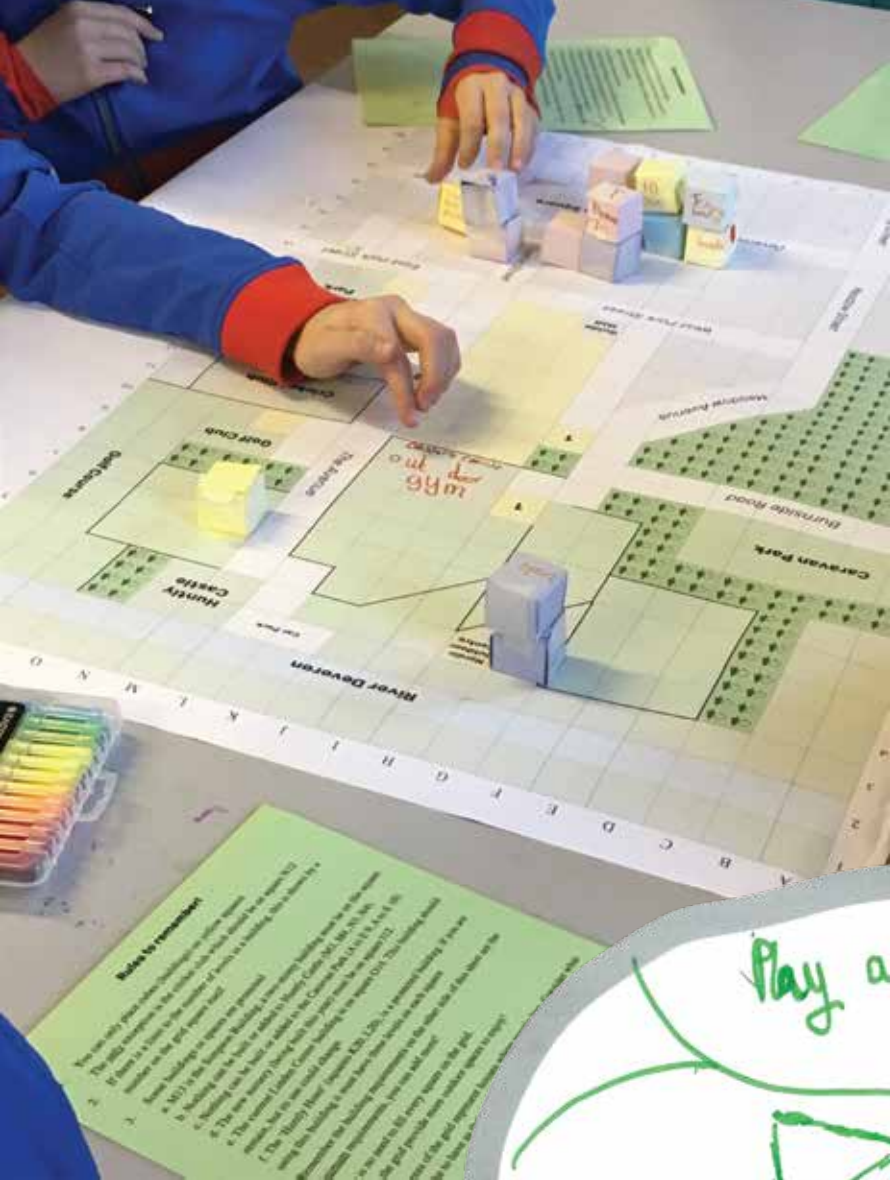


Huntly Castle and the tree-lined avenue that approaches it from the south are scheduled monuments of national significance (red shaded area). It illustrates the development of Scottish castle design on one site over five centuries, from the 12th century to the 17th, and the final incorporation around 1800 of the ruined structure into sections of the designed landscape around it (e.g. the Simpson Building or the Castle Hotel (formerly Huntly Lodge). This places the Castle and its Avenue under the protection of Heritage Environment Scotland. They have a statutory duty to ensure that any development in its vicinity either respects, embraces or enhances the historic environment of the Castle.

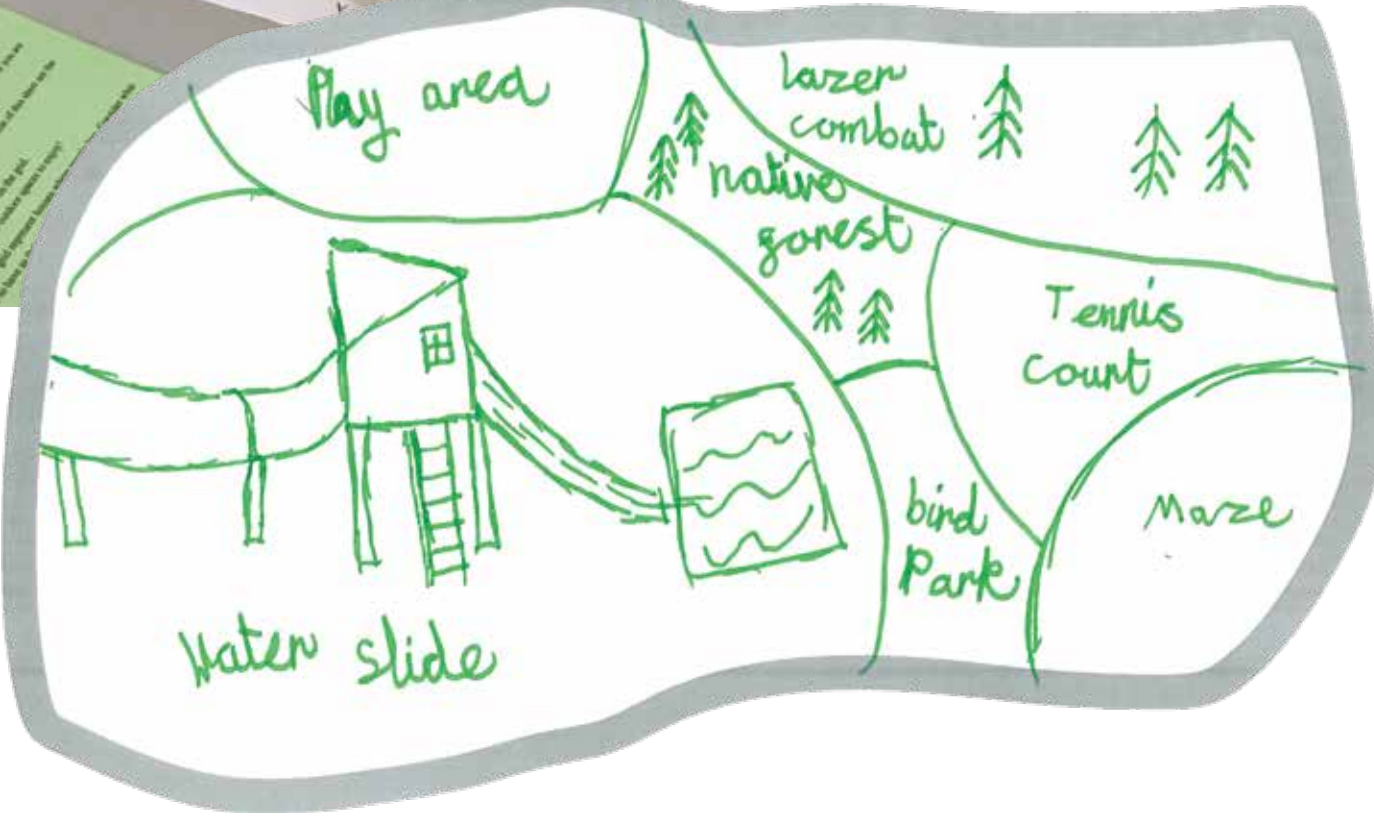
A large area of the more urban Huntly are part of the Town Centre Conservation Area (area outlined in red dotted line), administered by Aberdeenshire Council. First designated in 1973, and extended to cover a wider area in 2013. The measures of the conservation seek to preserve original architectural detailing, set down standards for repair and enhancement works and encouraging sensitive new developments.

# Your ideas, your plan...

All of the different proposals included in the plan have come from co-design sessions, workshops, meetings and conversations with people living and working in Huntly & District. The design team has brought these different ideas together into one plan, and spoken with key national and regional stakeholders to link mutual interests. Below is a sample of different ways people have contributed their ideas.



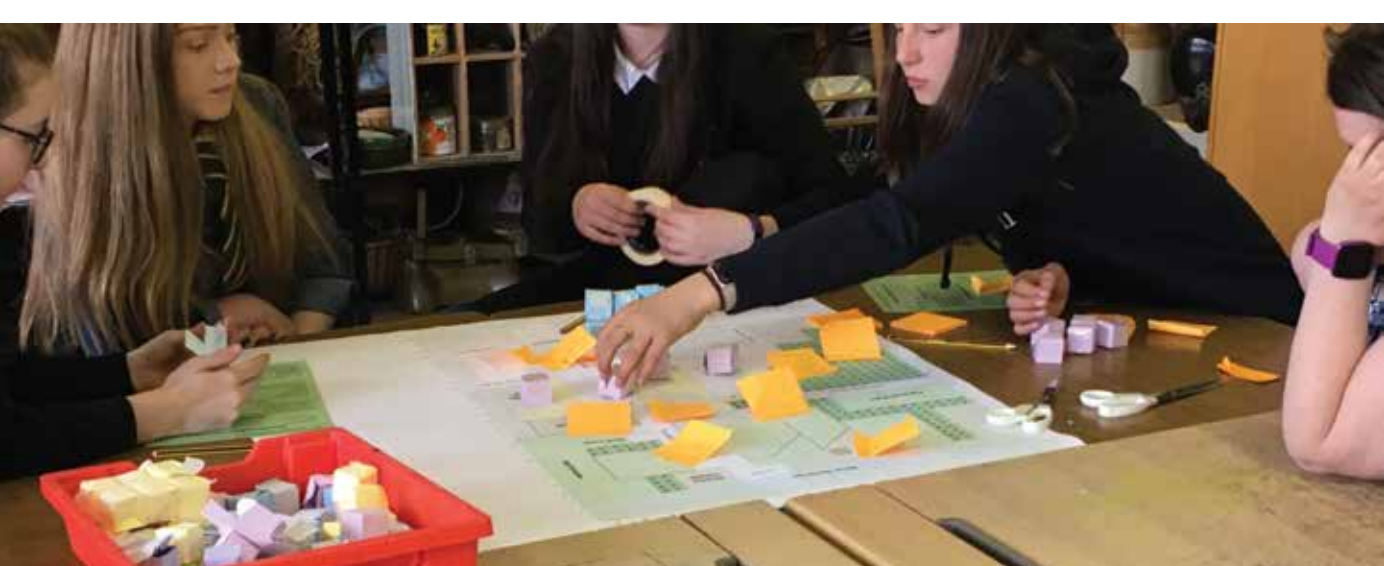
Adventure playground ideas



- Make a big sky obstacle course from Tree to Tree up in the air
- Be able to jump from tree to tree in a harness and elastic rope.
- Bungee Jumping.



Outdoor classroom ideas





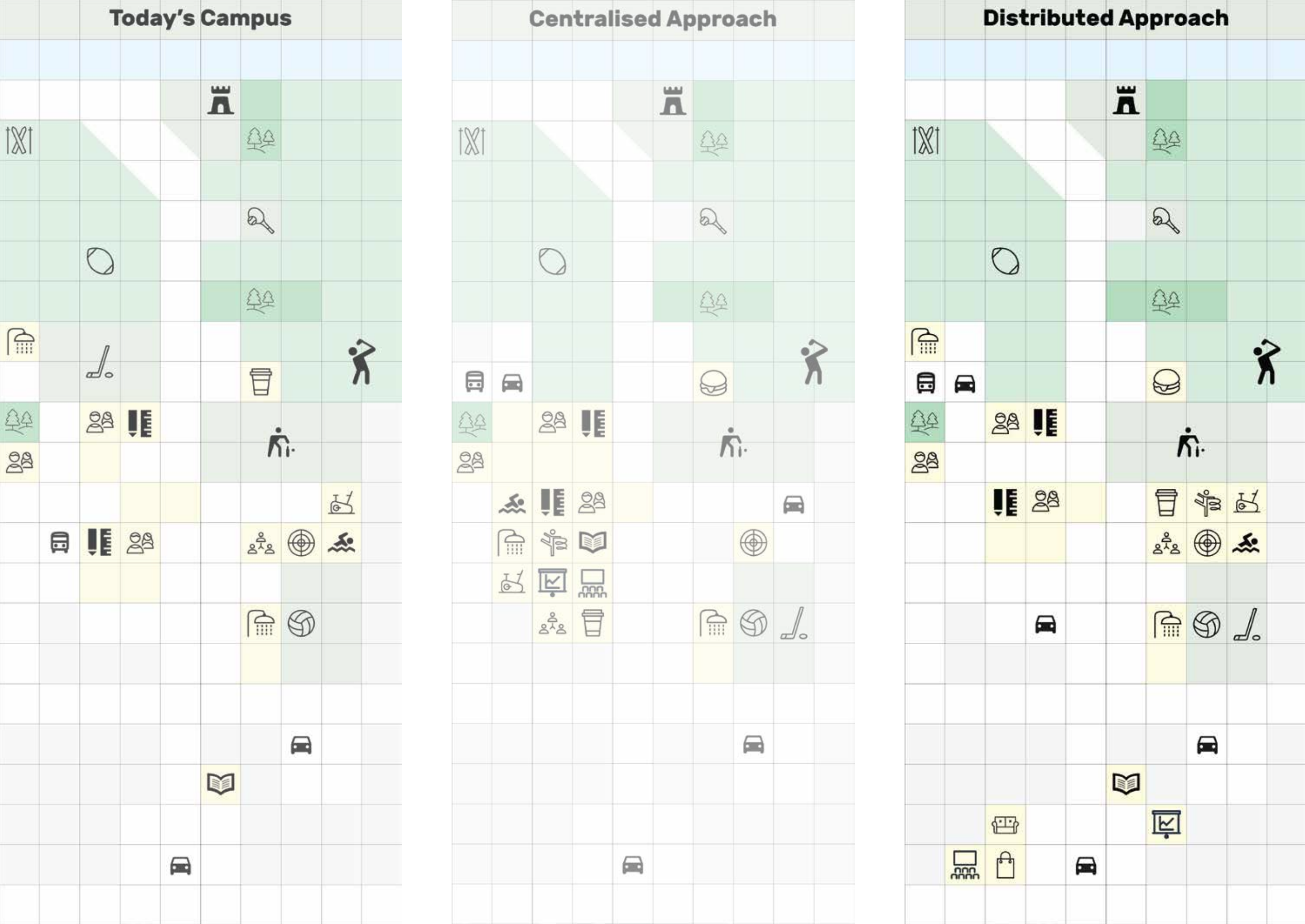
# The ambition is to build on the positive and unique aspects of the area to achieve:

- Schools that inspire children to enjoy learning and succeed together.
- Peaceful parkland that is a haven for nature and wildlife.
- A Square that welcomes people and gives them a reason to stay.
- Spaces that can be a platform for Huntly’s culture and creativity.
- Sporting facilities that support individuals and teams to develop and achieve higher performance.
- Public buildings that are accessible to all.
- Visitors all year round.
- Places where people of all ages can learn.
- Flexible buildings that make efficient use of resources.

## The vision...

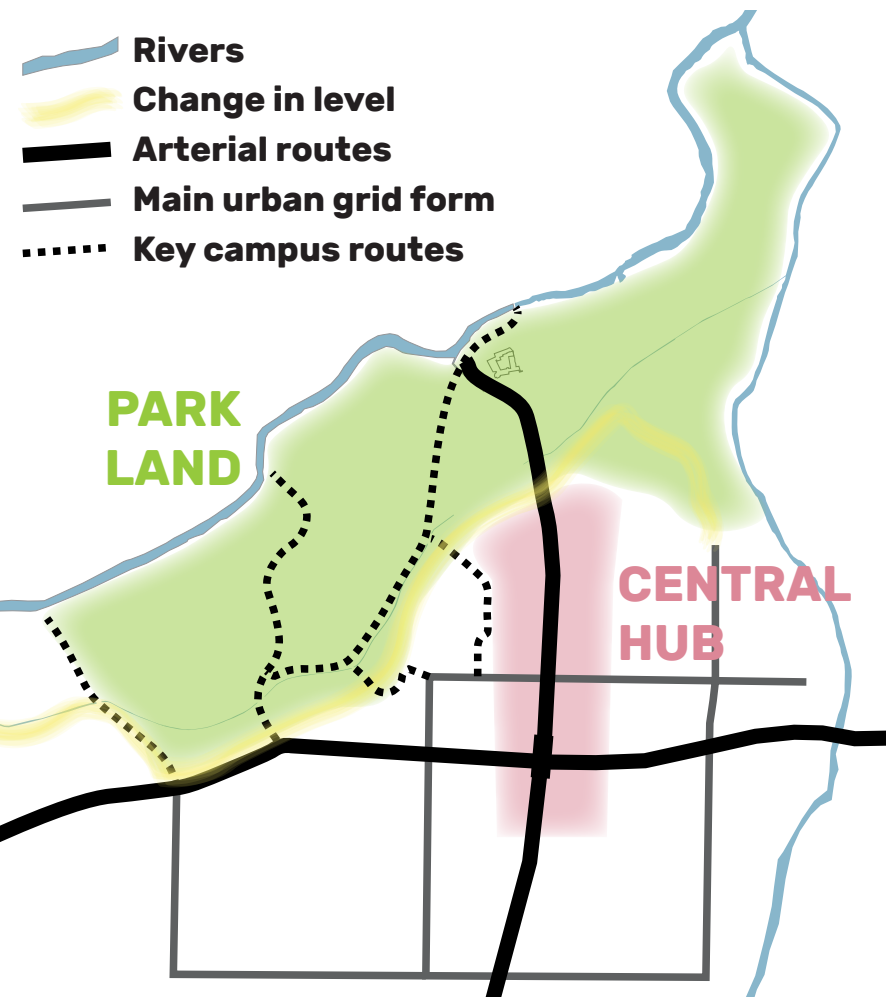
Recent years have increasingly seen the development of ‘community campus’ facilities across Scotland, almost invariably these centralise services and facilities in one location. While the application of the word ‘campus’ to these types of facilities may be relatively new, for decades Huntly has already had a form of learning and leisure campus; with the main schools, sport, leisure and community facilities in area.

Huntly has an opportunity to take a unique approach, complementing historic buildings that have been part of the town for many years, with sympathetic modern additions, and maximising the potential of introducing activity in the town centre, around the schools, and existing Linden Centre; in practice that means a greater number of existing buildings are retained and improved, reducing capital investment.



This ‘different type of campus’ allows development (and therefore activity) to be more evenly spread, respecting the historic significance of the Avenue and Huntly Castle. Importantly it also makes use of buildings in the town centre, directly supporting objectives within the Room to Thrive strategy to address the long term vacant commercial property trend by providing new purposes for buildings.

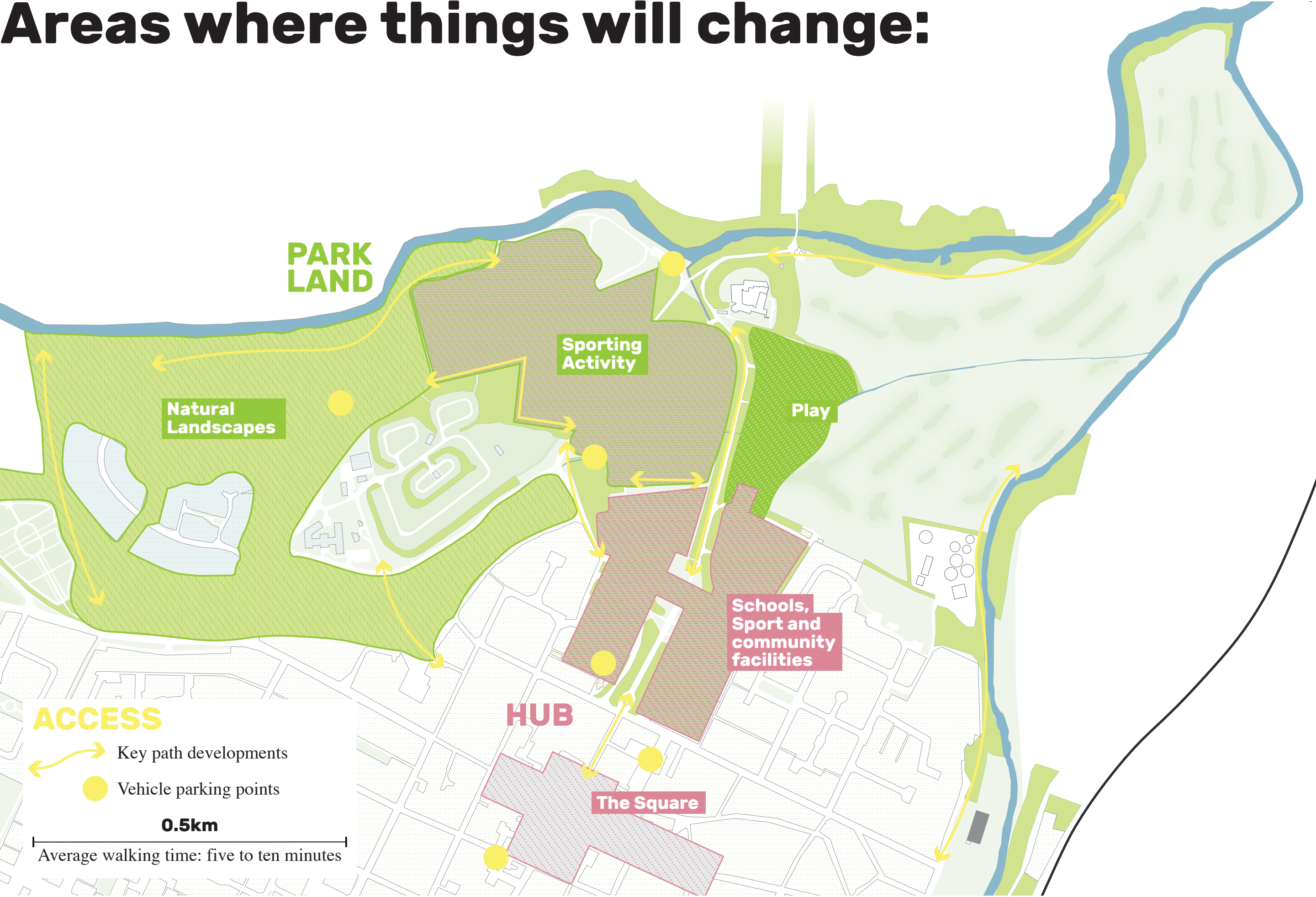
The plan is about more than activities that take place in buildings. A vast amount of open public space is on Huntly’s doorstep between the rivers Deveron and Bogie, and as these require levels of investment too to maximise the activities that can take place there, while respecting it as a natural outdoor place that showcase Huntly’s rural setting and the benefits for leisure and learning that it brings.



Looking at the key natural boundaries of the area, the rivers and change in level, along with the main (manmade) routes, not only are strong connections made to Huntly’s largely grid based layout but a number of zones are formed.

These zones, closely align with the nature of activity that takes place there creating character areas. In terms of development planning this helps articulate the content of the plan, the principles behind developments contained within it, and the type of campus for learning and leisure facilities that the community would like to see.

## Areas where things will change:



### HUB

Investing to create clusters of buildings supporting learning and leisure activity that can adapt to demand and maximise the advantages of a central location in town, and existing neighbouring facilities.

**Development principles:**  
Activating existing buildings in the Town Centre by increasing the amount of leisure and learning activities that take place there.

Condensing building developments in the vicinity of the Simpson Building to provide new facilities while making an efficient use of amount of land available.

### PARKLAND

Delivering improvements that are less intensive on the land and celebrates Huntly Castle and the diversity of individual parts of parkland and woodland that make a greater whole.

**Development principles:**  
Improving the quality of range of facilities available along the Avenue corridor, while recognising its historic importance and link with Huntly Castle.

Investing in outdoor sporting facilities to directly support development and performance.

Making sensitive interventions that support sustainability ecologies that accommodate nature and human activity side-by-side.

### ACCESS

Making it possible for people to get around the area in sustainable ways that respect its historic and natural settings.

**Development principles:**  
Adapting how people travel to the campus.

Creating choice in the ways people move around the area itself, once there.



# The proposals...

## Path Improvements

Striking a balance between improving accessibility and maintaining natural environments. Introducing signage for way-finding and interpretation sharing the currently untold stories of a place. Providing more places to sit or rest along the way.

### Promenade Paths

Making new links along the edges of pitches suitable for a range of users. With seating, they become social spaces for spectators when sport is being played. Introducing edible plants and hedgerows to soften the boundaries of turfed areas.

### West Loop

Completing the gaps to provide a fully accessible path going west along the Deveron, through the Meadow Plantation and back to town. Adding items of interest along the way, like public artworks, natural play items, or bouldering.

### East Loop

A less intensive development, increasing accessibility slowly over time. Securing safe access to the route at Castle Bridge and along the edge of the golf course. Making surface upgrades that improve access but only use natural materials.

## Town Shuttle Bus Service

A small, accessible, zero-emission bus following circular routes around town. Connecting with key parking and attractions. Passes stops either every 10, 15 or 30 minutes.

## Traffic Free Avenue

Changing the narrative of visitor journeys, encouraging people to stop in town and walk or cycle along the Avenue, so they can appreciate that it (and The Square) are an important part of the heritage experience. Protecting the Simpson Arch stonework from further vehicle damage. Access to the Linden Centre area along Christie Park road, and the Castle, Cooper Park or Golf Club via Burnside Road.

## Extra Parking Capacity

Compensating for changes on the Avenue and at the Linden Centre. Overhauling the layout at East Park Street car park and the south end of The Gordon Schools so more vehicles can be accommodated.

## Community Orchard and Meadow

A site for learning in a habitat mosaic of orchard, meadow, scrub, tree group and wetland. Making use of organic and less intensive land management practices. Providing a different landscape to explore, and unique items of interest.

## Outdoor Classrooms

Making slight landscape changes in the Meadow Plantation and Community Meadow & Orchard that open up areas that can be used by schools or groups for outdoor learning.

## Outdoor Gym

Providing equipment for people to do some moderate-intensity exercise for free, and in the fresh air. A site off Deveron Road has been suggested as being close to where people live, however eventual location and size will depend on the budget available.

## Woodland Rewilding

In effect, a continuation of what has already happened around the old skating pond. There are clusters of non-native woodland in the area that might benefit from rewilding to make a greater contribution to the wider ecology of the town.

## Roller-Ski Training Loop

Crafting a route through the trees that creates a new training loop that includes significant changes in gradient. This provides a more realistic and challenging training circuit to aid athlete performance and development.

## Larger Sports Pavilion

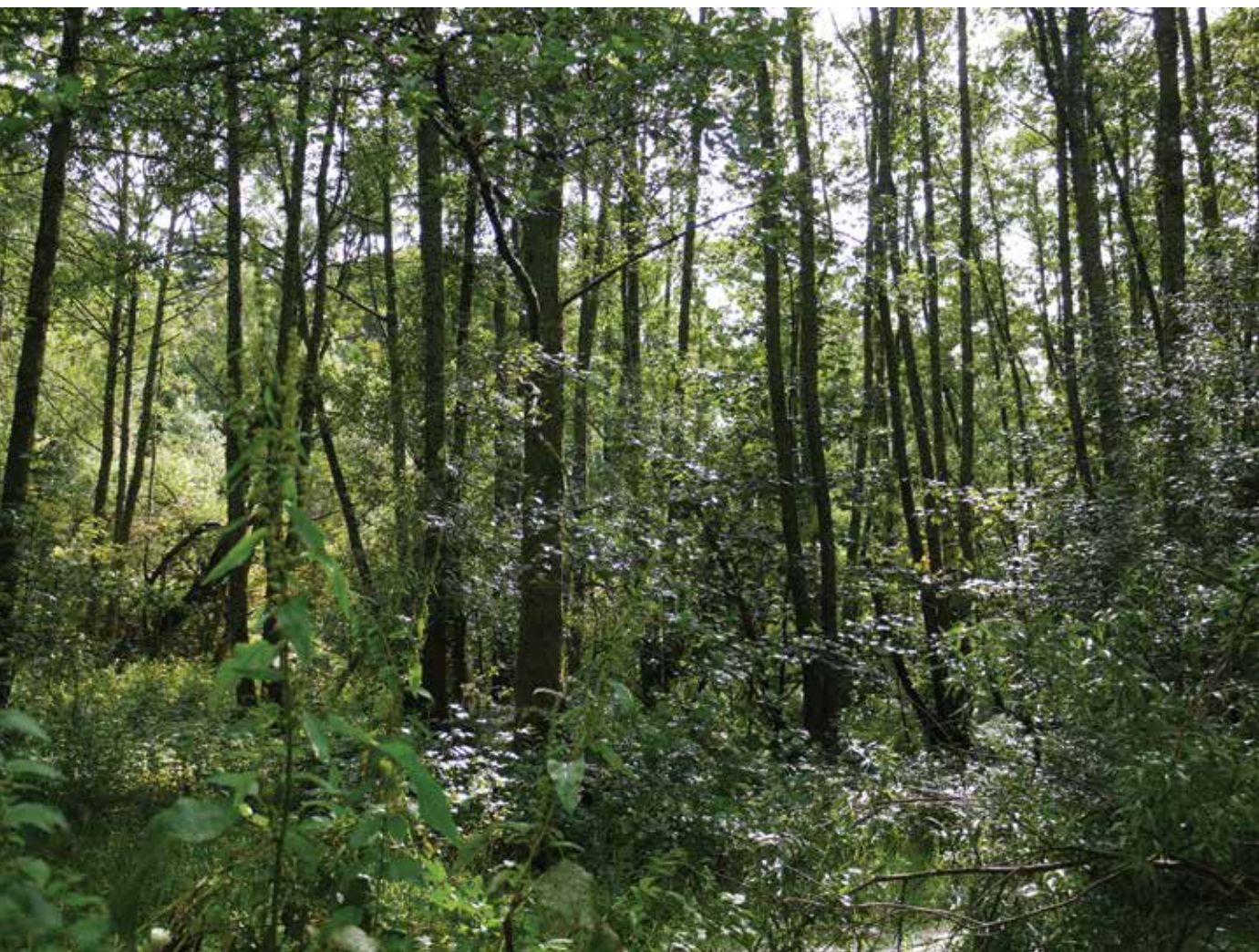
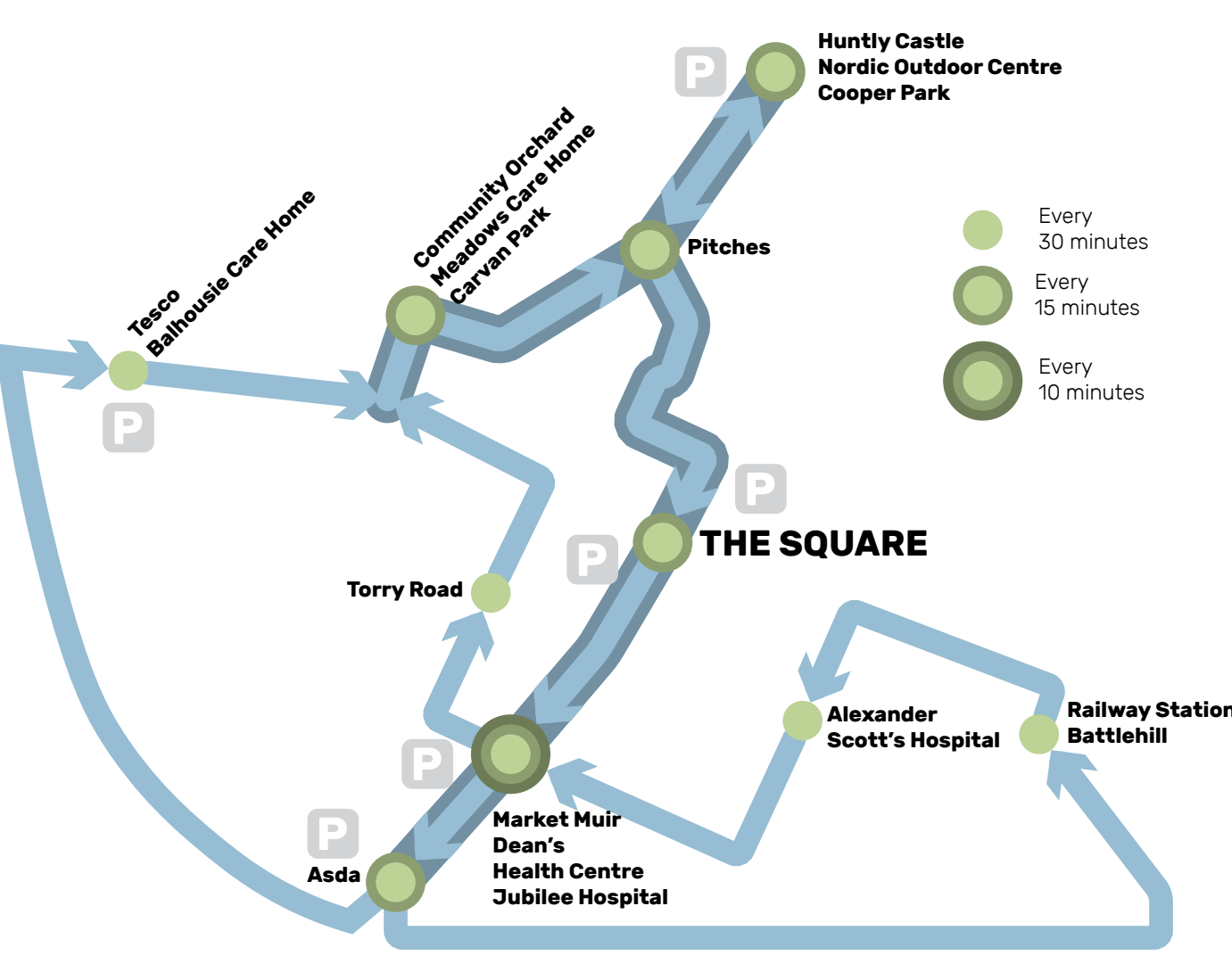
Supporting pitch activity by providing additional storage (replacing current containers), changing facilities, toilets and social facilities. Outwith the flood risk area, but still next to pitches. Could also be used by adjacent schools for outdoor PE changing.

## Bus Drop-Off

Relieving congestion in the town centre that comes from school buses. New nursery development is improving paths between site and schools. Also providing parking for visiting coaches (whether sport teams or tourists).

## Improved Pitches and Running Track

Reinstating drains, or reseeding to ensure the best playing surface possible. Changing the layout to provide a permanent running track location, with the long term ambition of an all-weather track. While not in the study area, the pitches don't always satisfy the level of demand that exists for playing surfaces. Comprehensive improvements are therefore needed to the Market Muir pitch and its pavilion facilities to meet demand.





## Expanded Nordic Centre

Encouraging more people to visit and use this unique facility. Creating a landmark building that can provide a lookout across to the river, castle, woodland, meadows and the hills that surround Huntly. Reframing the current offer, to include a cafe space with outward view, training room, and greater visibility to activities on offer. So the expanded centre benefits both sport development and visitors.

## Cooper Park Adventure Play

Introducing exciting opportunities for play like a pump track where the skate park once was, mazes or putting greens and forest based activities. Improving the link between the Golf Clubhouse and Park (which was once seamless) so public facilities (toilets and refreshments) increase the visitor offer.

## Visitor Hub

Taking advantage of the fact that Huntly Golf Club is open daily, it should be remodelled as a visitor hub for people to access the vast parkland Huntly has to offer. The key to this is viewing it as an enterprise opportunity that can sit alongside the functions the building performs for the golf club.

One aspect is catering provision. The clubhouse already provides large event space, packaging with other facilities (e.g. Nordic Centre) additional catering concessions could be added, using the golf club as a base. Another key enterprise opportunity are through different activities. The clubhouse could be a booking office for Nordic skiing, mountain bike hire, tubing, and of course golf. Packages could also be offered to capture tourist spend.

## New Nursery

Currently under construction, will offer a purpose-built environment for pre-school learning for the first time in the town. Will free up space in Gordon Primary School, with some of the temporary units in the playground currently scheduled for removal.

## School Upgrades

Improvements will soon be made to a courtyard space within The Gordon Schools. Other immediate improvements include new equipment in the primary school playground, and acoustic panelling in the secondary’s sport hall.

Comprehensive building refurbishment, or constructing new buildings, will require the most capital investment of all proposals; it is possible though! To get this, will require concerted lobbying by the community at a regional and national level

## Community Leisure and Wellbeing Centre

Creating a multi-purpose building in the heart of town that can be used for a variety of community, cultural, learning and sport activities. Fully refurbishing the Linden Centre and constructing a new additional building that links it with the swimming pool.

The new building can accommodate indoor sporting facilities at the current ‘ground’ level, with a distinct secure space for the Rifle Club on the current ‘basement’ level. Changing facilities and storage for Christie Park community users can also be placed in the ‘basement’ level.

## Christie Park Synthetic Pitch

Changing to a synthetic surface will provide a more resilient surface that can be used in most weathers, and more often in a typical week than turf can. Its proximity to the Much of the funding is in place to undertake the work, the Community Sports Trust taking forward the project require assistance in getting the full budget.

## The Square

With all the different proposals activity, The Square needs to be the start and end point for the combined package of proposals. Lending from the town’s motto (and song), the town offers plenty of ‘Room to Roam’ and partake in different activities, but there also needs to be ‘a home’ for it.

Improved public space in The Square can provide breathing space which invites people to stay. As ways of living and shopping changed, so should The Square. The plan doesn’t include any specific proposals for buildings or locations, as there have been clear specific asks of what The Square should offer, and this is more important than the building it is in.

Somewhere to...

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| • watch a film        | • work                 |
| • stay overnight      | • meet friends         |
| • grab a coffee       | • do an evening class  |
| • sit down for lunch  | • get some cash out    |
| • go out for a meal   | • put on an exhibition |
| • buy local produce   | • buy a book           |
| • learn something new | • relax and read       |

What is important is that The Square is that each of the below functions are interdependent; e.g. on your lunch you can pop across the square for a coffee, then two doors down to buy a new book and pick up a birthday gift, and across to another to shelter from the rain and eat your lunch.



An indicative ground floor plan of what is possible on this site

